



WOUNDED WARRIOR

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Send your comments, feedback

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AF wounded warriors attend two-day adaptive sports camp

by Staff Sgt. Alexandra Hoachlander
Air Force Public Affairs Agency

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas – More than 50 wounded, ill or injured Airmen from the Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Patient Squadron participated in a two-day adaptive sports camp March 21-22 at the Rambler Fitness Center on JBSA-Randolph.

The camp was provided by the Air Force Wounded Warrior Adaptive Sports Program, which introduces wounded, injured and

ill Airmen to adaptive sports, such as wheelchair basketball and sitting volleyball, as early in the healing process as possible, and to get them interested in competing locally, or even at the national level at the Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The program is meant to help Airmen heal not only physically, but socially, emotionally and spiritually as well.

"Competition, camaraderie, testing physical limits; those

things become forgotten in the recovery process and some warriors develop an 'I can't' philosophy," said Tony Jasso, program manager. "We are here to show them that they can."

In December 2012, the

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Staff Sgt. Lara Ishikawa explains the functions of a recumbent bike during an Adaptive Sports Program camp March 21. The program introduces adaptive sports early on in the healing process in order to promote physical, social, emotional and spiritual healing. (U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Westin Warburton)

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purposes only. The

Airman deals with results of combat in 2009

by Desiree N. Palacios
Air Force News Service

FORT MEADE, Md. -- She was four days out before returning home to Dover Air Force Base, Del., from her deployment in Provincial Reconstruction Team, Farah, Afghanistan, when her world was turned upside down.

Master Sgt. Jennifer Allara and her explosive ordnance team started the day off at 3:30 a.m. for a routine combat mission patrol. Allara and her EOD teammates went outside the fence to sweep an area called "IED alley" in Shewan, Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, they didn't foresee what was about to happen next.

Allara is a 436th Civil Engineer Squadron explosive ordnance disposal team leader currently based out of Dover AFB who had her world turned upside down in a matter of minutes.

"We are trained to accept a certain amount of danger with our job," Allara said. "And I always thought in terms of me, what if something happens to me? What if we get blown up? I wasn't thinking in terms of losing a team member in a turret. It was a very big wake-up call."

It was on that fateful day in September 2009, Allara lost her good friend and co-worker, Staff Sgt. Bryan Berky, during an attack.

Her team was involved in a firefight and as they tried to turn around to get out of the firefight their vehicle got stuck in the sand. She said as her team tried to get their vehicle out of the sand, a team of Afghan national soldiers flew 500 meters ahead of her team in trucks.

She recalls them disappearing into a large cloud of smoke and hearing a detonation.

"The only thing I could think of ... that was us ... that was going to be me," she said. "And they just took that."

They were receiving indirect fire and mortars when another team member yelled out to their turret gunner, Berky, to see if he was OK.

“

PTSD is not what's wrong with you, it's what happened to you. It's a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.

Master Sgt. Jennifer Allara

”



Graphic by Sylvia Saab

Allara looked over to Berky and noticed he was hunched over in his harness and unresponsive. She pulled an emergency latch and pulled him into her lap. She yelled out for a medic, then noticed the small bullet hole in his head.

Her team grabbed a medic, put him into their vehicle and they drove to a casualty evacuation point. As the fire fight continued a field surgeon did everything to save him. Unfortunately, Berky didn't make it.

With four days left before her team was heading home, Allara was allowed to fly back with Berky's remains back to the United States.

As a result of her attack, Allara suffers from traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, conditions she struggles with to this day.

She credits her co-workers helping her to get where she is today. She thanks their constant check-ups and looking her in the eye and asking her, "How are you doing?" or "Are you OK?"

"Knowing what's wrong with me and working with the doctors to combat that, if I know what it is, I can overcome it," Allara said. "I'm looking forward to the holistic approach they take in treatment. That intrigues me."

Allara hopes to be an example for others returning from a deployment. She hopes her story will help other to seek help.

"There is no shame in getting help," she said. "There is no shame in recognizing what is going on with someone and being able to reach out and help. If you don't take care of yourself, you can't take care of your Airmen."

She stresses that Airmen shouldn't feel ashamed if they are experiencing symptoms of PTSD.

"PTSD is not what's wrong with you,

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AF warrior receives 5th Bronze Star

by Senior Airman Melanie Holochwost
Air Force Special Operations Command
Public Affairs

HURLBURT FIELD, Fla. -- A Bronze Star with Valor was presented to an explosive ordnance disposal technician and Air Force Wounded Warrior here March 22, making him only the fifth Airman to receive five Bronze Star medals.

Tech. Sgt. Ronnie Brickey, Air Force Special Operations School force protection branch noncommissioned officer in charge, said receiving this particular Bronze Star was humbling for him.

Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, AFSOC commander, presented Brickey this medal for his bravery during a mission in Afghanistan on June 1, 2011.

"Ronnie, your unmatched skills, courage, and selflessness epitomize what being a warrior is all about," Fiel said during his speech at the medal presentation. "You're an extraordinary example to us all."

Brickey said it all started while performing an IED post-



Tech. Sgt. Ronnie Brickey, Air Force Special Operations School force protection branch noncommissioned officer in charge, poses with Chief Master Sgt. James Brewster after receiving a Bronze Star with Valor on March 22, 2013, at Hurlburt Field, Fla. Brickey said Brewster was his first mentor in the Air Force and that he wouldn't be where he is today without his advice. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Melanie Holochwost)

blast analysis. He identified three additional IEDs and knew he had to render them safe.

Although this alone can be a normal day's work in the EOD business, things went downhill fast for this Air Commando.

Brickey said he was able to eliminate the first two threats pretty quickly; however, after he started working on the third IED, his unit came under direct fire from multiple positions.

Brickey protected his team of 20 U.S. soldiers, four Canadian soldiers, and two Afghan

National Security Forces members throughout the 40-minute firefight by posting himself next to the IED to prevent accidental detonation. During this time, he repeatedly exposed himself to direct fire, returned fire on the enemy, and directed his team past the IED.

Finally, Brickey attached a render safe tool to the IED and instructed his team to disable it remotely. He also used his body to shield two soldiers from the potential blast.

Because of

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TSA offering faster screening for wounded warriors

WASHINGTON -- The Transportation Security Administration now offers expedited airport screening to severely injured members of the armed forces.

In addition to offering curb-to-gate service, TSA now allows wounded warriors to move through security checkpoints without having to remove shoes, light outerwear jackets or hats, officials said.

"In recognition of the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, we have revised our screening requirements to allow expedited screening for this trusted group of citizens," said John Halinski,

TSA's deputy administrator and 25-year Marine Corps veteran.

To be eligible for this service, a wounded warrior or traveling companion should email the Military Severely Injured Joint Services Operations Center, MSIJSOC@dhs.gov, or call 888-262-2396 with itinerary information for the traveling party. Traveling companions will receive standard screening.

TSA also provides expedited screening for service members. At airport checkpoints nationwide, military personnel in uniform with proper identification, whether

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Services and Resources

[Operation Warfighter](#) is a federal internship program for recovering service members. The main objective of OWF is to place wounded warriors in supportive work settings that positively impact their recovery. The program represents an opportunity to help recovering service members' employment readiness by providing assistance with resume building, exploring employment interests, and developing job skills through internship opportunities. Operation Warfighter has placed more than 2,500 service members in internships with more than 105 different federal agencies and sub-components. For more information, click [here](#).

The In Honor of Our Troops Foundation offers a [Vacations for Vets Program](#) providing free accommodations through the American Resort Development Association. Free accommodations are available at resorts worldwide. Although accommodations are at no cost to the applicant, there is a \$75 non-refundable processing fee that must be submitted with an application in order to start the application process. A resort certificate that is required for check-in will be issued when the application is approved. For a listing of resort accommodations worldwide and other program information, visit <http://ihoot.org/vacation-for-vets>.



[Head Start](#) is a federal program that helps children ages birth to 5 years old from low income families prepare for school. In addition to education, the program provides health, nutrition, and social services depending on the family's needs.

Bureau offers consumer financial protection

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has launched the nation's largest public database of federal consumer financial complaints on financial institutions and their products and services.

This database is an expansion of the bureau's original credit card complaints database and now contains more than 90,000 complaints on mortgages, student loans, bank accounts and services, other consumer loans and credit cards.

Using the database, the public can see what consumers complained about and why, as

well as how and when the company in question responded to the complaints. The database even includes a sub-category of products. For example, the Mortgages category includes searchable data on reverse mortgages, conventional fixed



mortgages, conventional adjustable mortgages, and home equity loans or lines of credit.

Many of these complaints touch on products, services and companies used by Airmen and their families. This new tool can help people protect themselves from businesses and financial products that have poor track records.

The public consumer database can be found at

<http://www.consumerfinance.gov/complaintdatabase/>.

(Courtesy of the CFPB)

Special events

Through [The Veteran Tickets Foundation](#), wounded warriors can receive free or discounted tickets to major events including concerts and sporting events throughout the country. Since 2008, the foundation has distributed more than half a million event tickets. According to the foundation's VetTix website, everyday, in every city, there are events with empty seats that could be filled by those who serve or



have served. Foundation officials believe the events that bring Americans together in the spirit of celebration, competition and camaraderie are all-American moments when people should welcome and acknowledge the nation's veterans. For more information, click [here](#).

The Department of Veterans Affairs "[Mission Redefined](#)" program encourages wounded warriors to get involved with adaptive sports in their communities. The VA's 2013 Community-Based Adaptive Sports Program Directory provides information on various adaptive sports events. Regardless of skill level, wounded warriors can participate in order to achieve better overall fitness and health. According to program officials, running, swimming, or shooting hoops with peers, being active, having fun, and developing new skills all lead to stronger overall self-worth and productivity. Some people compete recreationally, while others dream of competing in future Paralympics Games. To learn more about the VA's Adaptive Sports Program, and find events and points of contact in your area, click [here](#).



Do you need to update your contact information?

NOTE - Updates should be provided to: AFW2 Program Office, AFPC Disabilities Branch, DEERS, DFAS, and the VA.

AFW2 Program Office – Call **800-581-9437** or via email: wounded.warrior@us.af.mil

AFPC Disabilities Branch for people on the Temporary Disability Retired List – Email disability@us.af.mil

Based on the last four digits of your Social Security number, call:

(0001-2499) **210-565-5561** (2500-4999) **210-565-5564** (5000-7499) **210-565-5562** (7500-9999) **210-565-5660**

DEERS – Updating info in DEERS is accomplished in one of three ways:

Call **800-538-9552**

Visit a military base ID card issuance facility

Visit the website at: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/faces/index.jspx?>

DFAS – Online at “myPay” website: <https://mypay.dfas.mil>

VA – Call **800-827-1000** or visit www.va.gov for the nearest VA office

